

**ABSTRACT**

The invention provides methods and materials for evaluating arthritis conditions. Specifically, the invention provides methods and materials for determining the severity of an arthritis condition in a mammal that involve determining whether or not a sample from that mammal contains an elevated level of a CD21L polypeptide, a lymphotoxin- $\beta$  polypeptide, or a chemoattractant polypeptide. The invention also provides methods and materials for assisting medical or research professionals in determining the severity of an arthritis condition in a mammal. In addition, the invention provides methods and materials related to kits that can be used to determine the severity of an arthritis condition.

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